PREFACE.

HAVING long meditated the commencement of a work on the medicinal vegetables of the United States, and feeling myself obligated for its completion, by the instructions from the University in which I have the honor to hold a professorship; it may be proper to make at the outset some general statements of the motives and objects of such a publication.

The Materia Medica, comprising the great body of medicinal agents now in use in the hands of physicians, cannot be said to need an increase in the number of its articles. It is already incumbered with many superfluous drugs; even its active substances are more numerous than can be of use to any one physician, so that it seems quite as susceptible of benefit from reduction as from augmentation in the number of its materials. Under these circumstances, the introduction of new medicines can only be authorized, where